



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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NEWS RELEASE

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USDA to provide up to \$928,000 and technical assistance to protect waste water facility serving Williamstown and North Adams

AMHERST, Mass. -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has approved up to \$928,000 in federal funds for work to protect a Williamstown, Mass. wastewater treatment facility endangered by damage resulting from severe rainstorms that occurred October 7-16, 2005. The plant, located on the Hoosic River, serves the City of North Adams and the Town of Williamstown.

The funds are being provided to the Hoosac Water Quality District (HWQD) through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program administered by NRCS. The agency is also providing technical assistance for the work.

HWQD Chief Operator Bradley O. Furlon requested the federal assistance, citing concern that further erosion of the riverbank could result in the failure of plant utilities including a water main, and a forced sewer main, resulting in raw sewage to discharge into the river, and could overwhelm the treatment plant with river water.

"The work that will be completed with NRCS technical and financial assistance will reduce the effects of flooding on the river bank, providing both environmental and public safety benefits," said Christine S. Clarke, NRCS State Conservationist for Massachusetts.

NRCS will cover 75 percent of the cost of installing approximately 600 linear feet of sheet piling for bank stabilization between the facility and access road parallel to the Hoosic River. The earthen berm will be reduced to the access road height, with re-vegetation taking place over all disturbed areas.

The Massachusetts Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF), administered by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), will cover the remaining 25 percent of funding for the riverbank project. Between \$300,000 and \$400,000 in a low-interest loan will be made available through the SRF to finish the project.

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"The stabilization and re-vegetation of the river bank will ensure that current and future upgrades to the Districts Treatment Plant will be protected. The support that DEP and the NRCS has given the HWQD has been crucial in securing funding for this project." said Bradley O. Furlon, HWQD Chief Operator.

"With the State Revolving Fund covering the balance of the riverbank stabilization project, the Commonwealth is protecting an investment that is vital to the Hoosic Water Quality District and the river environment," said Arleen O'Donnell, acting commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

In 2004, the HWQD received a \$6 million SRF loan to make upgrades to the treatment plant now being threatened by the riverbank erosion. Those upgrades include new pumps, screens and clarifiers, and new chemical feed equipment to help the plant meet its permitted phosphorus limit.

"I am very pleased to hear that federal and state funds will be used to protect the Hoosac River wastewater treatment facility," said Congressman John Olver. "These funds will go a long way in insuring that further erosion of the riverbank will not result in harm to the facility's equipment or harm to the river."

Through the EWP program, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to reduce the threat to life and property from excessive erosion and flooding caused by the sudden impairment of a watershed from a natural disaster. Nationwide, EWP funds address public safety and restoration efforts on private and public lands and are used to remove debris, restore eroded stream banks, re-seed burned areas and take steps to mitigate threats to people and property from impaired watersheds.

NRCS is a federal agency that works hand-in-hand with Massachusetts conservation districts and other partners to improve and protect the commonwealth's soil, water and other natural resources. Since 1935, private landowners and communities have voluntarily worked with NRCS specialists to prevent erosion, improve water quality and promote sustainable agriculture. For more information on NRCS in Massachusetts, visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

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